

QA10 – Food Allergy Progression

QUESTION:

Do food allergies progress? For example if a child has a fairly minor reaction to a food, such as a rash that may or may not itch, should that food be avoided because of the possibility that the minor reaction may progress to a more severe reaction with repeated exposure?

ANSWER:

Severe, life-threatening reactions in children and adolescents are most often associated with the ingestion of peanuts, nuts and seafood. Milk, egg, soy and wheat on the other hand are less likely to provoke fatal reactions. Patients sensitive to these foods should be warned that mild symptoms (like a rash) may represent a warning of more serious symptoms. To be safe, if a food is suspected of causing a mild reaction, such as a rash, the food should be eliminated until the child can be tested.

Many food allergies tend to disappear with age. According to the literature, preschool children have a twofold chance of outgrowing a food allergy than school children.

So the answer to the question is: 1) take the allergy symptoms seriously until the child is evaluated, and 2) allergies don't always progress, some actually lessen or disappear with age.

Reference:

- 1) Metcalfe, Sampdon, Simon, Food Allergy: Adverse Reaction to Foods and Food Additives, Blackwell Science, 1997.